

Judith A. Pheil

## Entertaining Can Be Easy, If You Plan It Like This

Most families like to entertain company at meals in their homes—friends, business associates, neighbors, relatives. Good company meals may be simple but should be delicious and nicely served in pleasant surroundings. With a little careful planning, entertaining can be trouble free and enjoyable.

Entertaining will be easier if you know your guests—what they like and what they don't like, and if you know yourself—your capabilities and your facilities and stay within them.

Regardless of the number and kind of guests or the type of service, it pays to plan family or company meals early and carefully. Like planning any other meal, you will include a protein dish containing meat, poultry, fish, eggs, or cheese; a fruit or a salad; vegetables and bread; dessert and beverage. Remember the importance of contrast in flavor—something sweet, something tart, and something bland, something spicy; color—follow a color scheme; texture—something soft, something crisp. Use edible garnishes to make food look attractive, but avoid overdoing it.

Buffet meals usually are limited to

a main course, dessert, and beverage. However, a first course of juice or soup and crackers is sometimes served in the living room before inviting guests to the table.

Eliminate as much last-minute preparation as possible. The menu may be as individual and as informal as the service. Substantial, delicious food, easily prepared and attractively served, will make you the "hostess with the mostest."

Foods that can be prepared several hours or days ahead of time are worth considering. Some time-saving suggestions are: Meat loaf, scalloped or casserole dishes, baked ham or turkey, salads and desserts that can be molded or arranged in individual servings and stored for a few hours, fresh vegetables prepared and stored in plastic bags or in the vegetable crisper in the refrigerator.

A well-stocked pantry shelf and home freezer are important to the homemaker as she plans both family and company meals. Many foods available are designed to save the homemaker time and energy. There are frozen foods that provide constant variety in fruits, vegetables, and meats; frozen precooked foods in endless variety; packaged mixes for everything from biscuits, cakes and dessert toppings to meringues, candy, and casserole dishes; quick-cooking cereals; hundreds of canned foods; ready-to-eat bakery products. The job of the busy homemaker is to use these foods to best advantage to save her the most time and energy at home.

Keep the grocery list flexible enough to take advantage of bargains in food your family and friends like, and buy in quantity to save money and shopping time.

Planning meals and spending the food dollar go hand in hand; and again with careful planning, food costs can be kept to a minimum and meals made just as attractive and nutritious. Foods

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in convenient forms sometimes cost more money but the homemaker will spend much less time in the kitchen.

Here are a few tips to make meals look and taste more extravagant than they actually are:

- Add visual and taste appeal with attractive color, flavor, and texture combinations.
- Serve hot foods hot and cold foods well chilled.
- Take full advantage of herbs and spices and other seasonings and occasionally experiment with new recipes (when you're not expecting guests).
- Watch magazines, newspapers, and television for ideas to "dress up" favorite foods.

Intelligent shopping can save you money, time, and energy. A shopping list is recommended. If you've made

meal plans for the week including the company dinner, putting the list together is simple. Look over your menus and write down the items you will need. Check your pantry shelf, refrigerator, and freezer and add any staples that are running low. If you have jotted these down during the week as the supply dwindled, this part of the list will only take a minute. List foods in the order they are stocked on the market shelves. Study the food ads for the day you do your shopping, and make substitutions or additions if you wish. Avoid impulse buying. It doesn't help you stay within your budget.

In spite of all best-laid plans, occasionally a crowd pops in unexpectedly. With no time to prepare ahead, a casserole meal is great when you can rely on ingredients from your pantry shelf and freezer.

Donuts and apple cider as a Halloween treat.



This menu is built around a casserole recipe:

Chicken Tuna Bake  
Buttered Green Snap Beans  
Cabbage Slaw  
Muffins  
Peaches with Whipped Topping  
Beverage

### CHICKEN TUNA BAKE

*8 to 10 servings*

8-ounce package cut spaghetti or macaroni  
1 cup chopped onion  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  cup chopped green pepper  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  cup fat  
 $\frac{1}{4}$  cup flour  
2 cups milk  
2 cans condensed cream of chicken soup  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  cup chopped pimienta, if desired  
2  $\frac{6}{8}$ - or 7-ounce cans flaked tuna  
Slivered almonds, blanched

Cook pasta as directed on package; drain.

Cook the chopped onion and green pepper in hot fat until tender. Blend flour into fat. Slowly stir in the milk. Cook over low heat until thickened, stirring constantly.

Mix in cream of chicken soup, chopped pimienta, tuna, and pasta. Pour the mixture into a casserole, top with almonds, and bake, uncovered, at 350° F. about 35 minutes.

While the casserole is baking, shred 1 medium head of cabbage (1 pound cabbage makes about 5 cups) and toss it with a dressing made by mixing  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup sugar,  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup vinegar,  $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon salt, and  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup mayonnaise. Chill slaw before serving.

If the beans are frozen, cook them covered in a small amount of water. Canned ones will only need to be heated. Add a small dab of butter or margarine just before serving.

You may want to ask one of the children or a guest to set the table while you open canned peaches and arrange them in dessert dishes and make the coffee. Have someone prepare the muffins from a mix for you so they are ready to pop into the oven when the casserole is done. By the time the other food is on the table, the muffins will be ready to serve piping hot. In an hour or so you can have a

delicious meal ready to serve 8 to 10 hungry people, and it will have been easy and great fun.

Don't let weekend guests keep you in the kitchen. Relax and enjoy them by planning wisely. Shop ahead, cook ahead (as much as possible), and use heat-and-serve frozen, canned, and packaged foods.

Here are suggestions for meals for Friday night through Sunday dinner:

### FRIDAY NIGHT SUPPER

Oven-Fried Chicken  
Creole Rice  
Mixed Green Salad  
Fruit Compote  
Beverage

### OVEN-FRIED CHICKEN

*8 to 10 servings*

$\frac{1}{2}$  cup flour  
1 teaspoon salt  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon pepper, if desired  
2 teaspoons paprika  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  cup butter or margarine  
2 cut-up, ready-to-cook chickens (2 to 3 pounds each)

or

8 to 10 serving-size chicken pieces

Preheat oven to 400° F.

Mix flour, salt, pepper, and paprika in a bag.

Shake each piece of chicken in the bag to coat well.

Melt fat in a shallow casserole in the oven. Turn pieces of chicken in casserole to coat with fat.

Lay chicken in casserole with skin side down.

Bake for about 30 minutes or until golden brown on underside.

Turn and bake about 20 minutes longer or until tender.

### CREOLE BAKED RICE

*10 servings*

2 cups packaged precooked rice  
4 cups canned tomatoes  
2 medium onions, chopped  
1 medium green pepper, chopped  
2 teaspoons salt  
2 tablespoons butter or margarine, melted

Mix all of ingredients in a 2½- to 3-quart casserole; cover.

Bake in oven along with chicken at 400° F. for 30 to 45 minutes, or until mixture thickens.

### FRUIT COMPOTE

Arrange in your prettiest bowl and chill a combination of two or three fresh or canned fruits— a) melon balls, strawberries, blueberries; b) peach halves, green grapes; c) mandarin oranges, pineapple chunks, dark cherries. Garnish with sprigs of mint.

### SATURDAY BREAKFAST

Chilled Juice  
Coffee Cake  
Individual Cereal Packs  
Milk for cereal  
Beverage

This is a simple fix-it-yourself breakfast. Set the table the night before. Have the juice ready in the refrigerator. Cover coffee cake, which you've made ahead of time from a mix, to prevent drying. Provide bowls for cereal. Have a pitcher of milk ready in the refrigerator for cereal or beverage. Keep water hot on a candle warmer for making instant coffee.

### SATURDAY LUNCH

Clam Chowder  
Saltines  
Celery and Carrot Sticks  
Frozen Cheesecake  
Beverage

This menu is just a matter of assembling. Prepare cans of chowder and serve in large bowls. Prepare celery and carrot sticks before lunch and keep in crisper until serving time. Brew a pot of coffee and serve with readymade cheesecake.

### SATURDAY NIGHT BUFFET

Hamburger Stroganoff  
on  
Buttered Noodles  
Tossed Tomato, Cucumber, Endive Salad  
French Dressing  
Baked Custard with Maple Sirup  
Beverage

This is an easy menu to serve to any number of guests. You may want to invite several couples.

### HAMBURGER STROGANOFF

8 servings

2 pounds ground beef  
1 cup chopped onion  
4 tablespoons butter or margarine  
2 cans condensed cream of mushroom soup  
1 teaspoon paprika  
1 teaspoon salt  
Dash pepper  
1 cup dairy sour cream  
Cooked noodles, as desired

In frying pan, brown beef and cook onion in fat until tender; stir to separate meat. Add soup and seasonings; simmer 5 minutes. (Stroganoff can be prepared this far a day ahead and stored in refrigerator.)

Just before serving time add the sour cream and heat until the mixture is simmering hot. Do not boil. Serve it over noodles.

### SUNDAY DINNER

Broiled Steak  
Baked Potatoes  
Butter, Margarine, or Sour Cream  
Broccoli  
Hearts of Lettuce with Italian Dressing  
Ice Cream  
Beverage

If the weather is nice, the steaks can be grilled outdoors and dinner eaten on the patio. Allow about a half hour for the coals to be hot enough for grilling. Medium-sized potatoes will bake in the oven at 425° F. in 50 to 60 minutes. Wrapped in heavy foil, the potatoes will bake on the outdoor grill in the same length of time. Frozen broccoli requires about 15 minutes on top of the range. Brown-and-serve rolls will heat in oven or on the grill with potatoes during last 10 minutes of baking time.

Your husband will probably want to grill the steaks—this takes 10 to 30 minutes, depending on how well done you like them.

And, of course, the ice cream will be served from the freezer.

When teens give a party, the menu can be simple, but that doesn't mean the food can't be good and plentiful.

How's this for an after-the-game supper—

Baked Ham  
Baked Bean Casserole  
Relishes  
Pumpkin Tarts  
Apple Juice

Let the teenagers prepare the food and serve it. They will enjoy their own party.

A canned ham can be baked ahead of time, canned baked beans are used for the bean casseroles, and canned pumpkin for the tarts.

### BAKED BEAN CASSEROLE

*8 servings*

6 slices bacon  
1 medium onion, chopped  
2 1-pound cans pork and beans  
1 teaspoon dry mustard  
 $\frac{3}{4}$  cup brown sugar, packed  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  cup catsup

Caramel snowballs may be prepared in advance, and served to young guests with quickly made coffee Mexican style. For four to five medium apples, melt down a pound of caramels in top of double boiler. Impale apples on ice cream sticks, dip in caramel when it has become smooth sauce, and then into flaked coconut. Place apples on wax paper and chill a few minutes in refrigerator until the caramel is firm. Fix the beverage by preparing equal amounts of hot coffee and hot chocolate separately. Pour coffee and chocolate together into mugs.



Fry bacon; remove from frying pan. Brown onion in 1 tablespoon bacon drippings in frying pan. Add beans, mustard, sugar, catsup, and crumbled bacon. Mix well. Pour into casserole. Bake uncovered at 300° F. for 1 hour.

### PUMPKIN TARTS

*8 tarts*

Pastry for one 9-inch double crust pie  
3 eggs slightly beaten  
2 cups canned pumpkin  
 $\frac{3}{4}$  cup brown sugar, packed  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon salt  
 $1\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoons pumpkin pie spice  
 $1\frac{1}{4}$  cups milk  
1 6-ounce can evaporated milk

Roll pastry into eight 6-inch circles. Fit into large tart pans or muffin tins. In a large bowl mix eggs, pumpkin, sugar, salt, and spice. Stir in milk and evaporated milk. Pour into tart shells, and bake at 400° F. for 40 minutes or until set.